

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

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SP - 104/75  
15 September 1975  
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: PFIAB/NSC Staff Recommendation Regarding "Possible Revisions in the NIE Process"

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1. On 11 September 1975, at 1400 hours, Mr. George A. Carver, Jr., D/DCI/NIO and [ ] A/NIO/SP met with Mr. Richard Ober, Director for Intelligence Coordination, NSC Staff; Mr. Wheaton B. Byers, Executive Secretary, PFIAB; Cmdr. Lionel H. Olmer, Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary, PFIAB; and Dr. Roger C. Molander, Program Analysis, NSC Staff, to discuss a proposal by the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board for changing the procedures involved in the preparation of National Intelligence Estimates. Actually--and this has added an element of confusion to the situation--the PFIAB's recommendations involved an experimental approach to certain specific strategic issues and was much less sweeping than the NSC Staff's summary of it initially suggested.

2. Mr. Carver opened the discussion by reviewing his understanding of the sequence of events leading to the issuance of a memorandum (Attachment 1) from Dr. Kissinger dated 8 September 1975, forwarding a draft Presidential directive to conduct an experiment on the new procedures proposed by the PFIAB:

--Dr. Foster and Dr. Teller have disagreed with some of the judgments in National Intelligence Estimates, particularly those in the 11-3 and 11-8 series.

--On 6 August 1975, Dr. Teller and Dr. Foster discussed their complaints about NIE 11-3/8-74 with Howard Stoertz, NIO/SP and [ ] and in a separate meeting with key intelligence personnel working on NIE 11-3/8-75. (See Memorandum for the Record, TS 206650-75, SP-95/75, dated 8 August 1975--Attachment 3.)

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--It was the understanding of that group that Dr. Foster was preparing a memorandum recommending that the DCI establish an organization to take "adversarial positions" on key intelligence issues. Instead, without any prior discussions with the DCI or the officer managing the production of national intelligence, a memorandum was received suggesting a radical change in the way NIEs are prepared. ✓

Comprehensiveness of NIE 11-3/8

3. Before discussing the proposal itself, Mr. Carver wanted to dispell any notion which some may have that NIEs on strategic programs are prepared by a small group of people working in isolation. He described and showed documents illustrating the large number of people and resources involved in the process. Wheaton Byers said that he and members of the Board appreciated how NIEs were prepared. Commander Olmer said he recognized names on the extensive lists of participants in the preparation of NIE 11-3/8-75 as permanent meeting goers. It was pointed out that those to whom he referred were, like the members of USIB at the next higher level, spokesmen for their agencies. The detailed preparation of the many parts of the estimate involved the most knowledgeable analysts on the subject, and allowed for a full airing of divergent views.

4. One of the deficiencies according to Dr. Foster, as reiterated by Wheaton Byers and Commander Olmer, was that differing views (adversarial positions) were not exposed to the President and other consumers. 25X1

25X1 [redacted] pointed out that the differing views to which Dr. Foster had referred were well known to those preparing the estimate and had been considered. Wheaton Byers and Commander Olmer gave examples of adversarial positions which should be included. The President they said, should be exposed to a position that the USSR may achieve a credible first strike force during the next ten years, that US bombers could not penetrate Soviet air defenses, etc.

25X1 5. [redacted] explained that adversarial positions to be other than assertive must address those issues within the total context of a much more threatening Soviet posture--e.g., the quality of antclutter, look-down radars, the data processing system for netting low altitude surveillance

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radars, guidance system quality of ICBM--since these are the judgments which dictate the more general conclusions of the estimate. Thus, he said, the proposed change in procedures for preparation of NIEs would not allow opportunity to address these details. PFIAB representatives said that exposing differences on these kinds of issues was what Dr. Foster had in mind. [redacted] supported by [redacted], said exposing details about differing interpretations about biases in [redacted] quality measurements would hardly be an appropriate communication to Dr. Kissinger and the President.

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6. Mr. Carver said in this regard he did not consider the estimate to be perfect, and that needs for including a broader range of analyses or views in the estimate could be accommodated under the existing methods of preparing the NIEs. He noted that since Dr. Foster and Dr. Teller disagreed with some of the judgments we are making, the PFIAB proposal could be construed as recommending the establishment of another organization which might reach conclusions more compatible with their thinking. Wheaton Byers denied emphatically that this was Dr. Foster's and Dr. Teller's intent.

"Net Assessments"

7. One of the PFIAB's recommendations was that estimates be "pure intelligence documents" and eschew "net assessments." The question of what the Board, the Intelligence Community and the defense planners mean by "net assessments" was discussed at some length. Mr. Carver reviewed the various interpretations--ranging from engagement analysis by intelligence to understand what a given Soviet force development would add to Soviet capabilities, to SIOP-type war games, to generalized statements about the prospects for a Soviet "first strike capability." All agreed that these varying conceptions and definitions of "net assessments" existed and created a problem, since a proscription against incorporating "net assessments" in intelligence estimates could hardly be clear if the term "net assessment" was itself ambiguous. [redacted] pointed out that he had requested a definition of "net assessments" from Andy Marshall. The definition was long and complicated. Mr. Carver emphasized that whatever the definition, if intelligence is to assess the capabilities

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of a Soviet weapons system or force, it had to be done in the context of opposing forces ("capability" was not an abstract term, it included the notion of capability against something).

8. The PFIAB and NSC Staff representatives were asked what the Board ILLEGIB had in mind with respect to the function of the "net assessment" organization which, under its recommendation, would stand between the USIB and the recipients of NIEs. Would it conduct the "net assessments" intelligence is now performing, which the PFIAB believes intelligence is unqualified to perform and which the Board regards as intrusions into the defense planning process? Or would the "net assessments" conducted by this organization include those that are done by Andy Marshall, DDR&E and other non-intelligence organizations? The response was that it was hoped that the functions of the organization would include "the latter."

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The "Dissatisfied" Consumers

9. Mr. Carver pressed the PFIAB representatives, as did ██████████ to identify which high level consumers were dissatisfied with the NIE. Wheaton Byers said that Dr. Kissinger and the President were dissatisfied. ██████████ pointed out that neither Dr. Kissinger or the President read the entire NIE. Mr. Carver stated that he had discussed the estimate with Dr. Schlesinger and he was not dissatisfied. Though the Secretary of Defense disagreed with some of the estimate's specific reasoning and conclusions, he had praised it as a useful and most impressive document. (In response to Mr. Carver's question, Wheaton Byers admitted that he had not read NIE 11-3/8-74.) Commander Olmer said that he had read the entire estimate and that his and Dr. Foster's understanding was that the key judgments of the paper were supported by the remainder of Volume I. That the material in Volume I was covered in more detail in Volume II and that the analytical basis for Volumes I and II was in Volume III. He said the analytical basis in Volume III for judgments in the remainder of the estimate was very incomplete. It was pointed out to Commander Olmer that only selected details supporting Volumes I and II appeared in the annexes in Volume III. If a contrary impression about Volume III was reached, we should make clearer our organizational structure. The detailed analytical base for NIE 11-3/8-74 includes not only the nine interagency reports and studies (copies were shown) prepared in conjunction with the estimate, but also numerous other departmental and interdepartmental analyses and reports.

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10. Mr. Carver said that if key consumers--the President, Dr. Kissinger and others--were dissatisfied he would expect them to express that dissatisfaction to Mr. Colby. Wheaton Byers said in a "perfect world" that is the way the disagreements should be expressed. Mr. Carver asked what form and how were dissents expressed by Dr. Kissinger and the President. PFIAB representatives were not certain. Mr. Carver said he thought the group could understand why it was disturbing to prepare an NIE with a scope, approach and structure we have been told was responsive to key consumers' needs, only to be told by the Board that key consumers are dissatisfied and that we are misleading them.

Proposed NIE Preparation Procedures

11. As PFIAB representatives described the various defects they and the Board saw in NIE 11-3/8-74, they were asked how they envisioned the new procedures would remedy those defects. They had no clear idea about how the PFIAB proposed NIE process would remedy those defects. They were informed that most of the defects they noted could be dealt with under ILLEGIB existing procedures.

12. PFIAB representatives were asked whether the Board contemplated relegating the intelligence role to one of assembling encyclopedias of factual information for use by the net assessment group in arriving at forecasts and judgments about the future. While they were not certain on this point, the impression they left was that this was the role envisioned for intelligence and the USIB.

The "Experiment"

13. Mr. Ober stressed several times that what was proposed at this time was an experiment, not a wholesale restructuring of intelligence or the creation of a second intelligence community. Furthermore, he said that the DCI could comment on the proposal as he saw fit. Mr. Carver pointed out that the first line of Dr. Kissinger's memorandum said that a new NIE process was proposed by the Board. Mr. Carver said that if the President's desires corresponded with the Board's recommendations, the DCI would find it difficult to say that it was "the worst suggestion to come over his

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desk this year." Furthermore, if the Board, the NSC Staff, Dr. Kissinger and the President wanted the DCI to run an experiment, the DCI didn't need a Presidential directive to do so.

14. Mr. Ober agreed with Mr. Carver that the experiment could not be conducted until after the current NIE 11-3/8 is completed. He said they had no precise deadline for its completion. To assist in preparation of a response from the DCI, Mr. Carver was given a copy of the PFIAB memorandum for President on the subject (Attachment 2). (circular)

Post Meeting Discussion

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15. [redacted] said that his office was opposed to the recommendations for changes in the NIE process. He had not yet objected strongly to the proposal, expecting that the DCI's response would provide a convincing case against it.

NSC Memorandum Compared to PFIAB Recommendations

16. Following the meeting we reviewed the PFIAB memorandum for the President for consistency with the draft memorandum reviewed by intelligence representatives on 6 August 1975. In general tone and substance of the argument the two are consistent. Nothing in the 6 August draft, however, contained a recommendation for a three-step NIE process. It called the DCI to establish an adversarial group to carry out the suggestions in paragraphs I and II on page 6 of the memorandum for the President. The memorandum for the President, paragraph I, page 6 states that critical intelligence issues "should be subject to separate and competitive analyses...." This suggestion could mean the establishment of a separate adversarial group, but how the DCI would carry it out is not suggested. It is pointed out that the memorandum for the President contains "suggestions," not "recommendations." Dr. Foster considered that there was an important difference between the two. He said he didn't know whether what he had in mind would work. He did not want to go so far as to ask the Board to make a recommendation to the DCI (let alone to the President, as it turned out).

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17. The memorandum from Dr. Kissinger in this regard is not consistent with the Board's memorandum for the President. The Kissinger memorandum reports that the PFIAB "has recommended that the current NIE process be converted to a new three-step process," when in fact the Board only made suggestions and that was not exactly what the Board suggested. The Board suggested (paragraph III, page 6) that "the National Security Council adopt a three-step process. The first step is the generation of a purely intelligence document, the NIE, which carefully avoids the impression that a net assessment has been performed. The second step would involve a genuine net assessment, requiring participation by both the intelligence community and other agencies (Department of Defense, State, etc.), under the aegis of the NSC. The third and final step would involve a thorough critique of the net assessment document for the NSC by an entity which is enabled to function with an appropriate degree of independence."

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18. These differences between the Board's "suggestions" and the NSC Staff memorandum may be the reason Mr. Ober was upset when he learned Wheaton Byers had been made aware of the content of the NSC memorandum. There seems to be either some extremely poor communications about this matter, or the NSC Staff has its own aspirations for changing the NIE and/o [redacted]

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[redacted]  
Assistant National Intelligence Officer  
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Attachments

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